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[Julia Strikowski]

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WPA L. C. PROJECT Writers' UNIT

Folklore Collection (or Type)

Title Packinghouse worker's jobs

Place of origin Chicago, Illinois Date 6/16/39

Project worker Betty Burke

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Project editor

Remarks

W3628

Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A

Circumstances of Interview

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

JUL 6 - 1939

STATE

NAME OF WORKER Betty Burke

ADDRESS 1339 S. Troy St.

DATE June [16,?] 1939

SUBJECT Packinghouse worker's job

1. Date and time of interview June [1?], 1939, 6:30 pm.
2. Place of interview Packinghouse Union Hall 4758 S. Marshfield
3. Name and address of informant Julia [Strikowski?]

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4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

None

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

None

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

FORM B

Personal History of Informant

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE

NAME OF WORKER Betty Burke

ADDRESS 1339 S. Troy S.

DATE June 16, 1939

SUBJECT Packinghouse worker's job

NAME OF INFORMANT Julia Strikowski

1. Ancestry Polish, American born

2. Place and date of birth Chicago, back of the yards June 1917

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3. Family 6 younger sisters and brothers, mother, father, grandfather.

4. Places lived in, with dates Grandfather had a farm, outside of Joliet. 20 acres. Mother and children used to go there for 2 weeks every summer until 1929, when the bank got it and grandfather came to live with them.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Has worked only in the yards.

7. Special skills and interests Loves to sing. Wishes the union would form a big group of singers, men and women.

8. Community and religious activities

Catholic, Union member, belongs to a Polish Glee Club

9. Description of informant

Quiet but not shyly so. Small; intense brown eyes, serious expression.

10. Other Points gained in interview

FORM C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE

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NAME OF WORKER Betty Burke

ADDRESS 1339 S. Troy St.

DATE June 16, 1939

SUBJECT Packinghouse worker's job

NAME OF INFORMANT Julia Strikowski

Well, you know where they make the meat loaves, that's where I work. They come down from another floor already cooked and we're supposed to turn them out of the pans. They come in very large pans, and they're awful hot. Then we have to clean the pans. You know how meat loaf sticks to the bottom and sides of anything it's cooked in, all greasy and messy. We have to use steel wool and I don't mean the kind you use at home, but real steel wool. You can't help getting your fingers all scratched with little cuts from the steel, and with all that grease to get in any little sore it's pretty hard to get rid of them. Infections get pretty bad there, especially if you can't get the foreman to let you do some other work when you've got a bad sore. Sometimes a foreman will give a girl a break, but then sometimes they just get mad at the girl, as if it's her fault, and tell her to go home if she can't take it. So then she'll keep on working with [an?] infection in her finger or the palm of her hand, touching the meat somebody is going to buy and eat. Say, you'll never catch me eating any of that stuff.

Once I worked in the red peppers, you know, canning. Burn your fingers, just handling them. They put them up in a kind of pickle juice and that just burns the skin off your fingers.

Once I worked on the second floor and had to go up to the sixth floor every day for lunch. That's where the lunchroom was. We only have a half hour to eat in, and there'd be hundreds of girls ahead of me. Why, it took me five minutes to get up there, let alone

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waiting in line to buy a sandwich. And the food! I 2 don't know where they get it, but it's just rank. They know they can get away with it, I guess. By the time I'd get a sandwich there'd be no seats left and I'd just stand gulping down the food like a wolf. It's got so I can't eat like a human being any more, even when I'm home. It's a terrible habit to get into. I sit at the table and before the others are halfway through there I am finished and you know it's so embarrassing. But when you're used to swallowing your food down in a big hurry it's hard to break yourself of the habit. At work, I'd have about ten minutes to eat, ten minutes to get to the toilet and maybe wash my hands and face, ten minutes to get to and from the lunchroom.

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